



CONNECTICUT
LEGAL
RIGHTS
PROJECT, INC.

TESTIMONY OF KATHLEEN FLAHERTY, ESQ.
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HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING 3-3-2016

SB 277: AN ACT REQUIRING ABLE-BODIED ADULTS WITHOUT DEPENDENTS TO MEET WORK REQUIREMENTS TO RECEIVE BENEFITS FROM THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. **OPPOSE**

SB 279: AN ACT WAIVING ASSET LIMITS FOR WORKING PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TO RECEIVE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE. **SUPPORT**

HB 5437: AN ACT CONCERNING NONEMERGENCY MEDICAL TRANSPORTATION FOR MEDICAID RECIPIENTS. **CONCERNS**

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HB 5439: AN ACT CONCERNING THE ELIMINATION OF ASSET LIMITS IN CERTAIN PUBLIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS. **SUPPORT**

Senator Moore, Representative Abercrombie, and distinguished members of the Human Services Committee:

Good afternoon. My name is Kathy Flaherty and I'm the Executive Director of Connecticut Legal Rights Project (CLRP), a statewide non-profit agency that provides legal services to low income adults with serious mental health conditions. CLRP was established in 1990 pursuant to a Consent Order which mandated that the state provide funding for CLRP to protect the civil rights of DMHAS clients who are hospitalized, as well as those clients who are living in the community. I'm also the Vice Chair of the Keep the Promise Coalition (KTP). KTP is a coalition of advocates (people living with mental illness, family members, mental health professionals and interested community members) dedicated to ensuring that a comprehensive, community mental health system is created and sustained for children, adults and families in Connecticut.

We oppose SB 277. Currently, the state has a waiver to allow people who have been unable to find a job (in areas of the state where the unemployment rate remains high) to continue to receive food stamps (SNAP.) This bill would eliminate the state's ability to continue to implement the

waiver, and punish people who have been unable to find work by making them ineligible for food stamps.

We support SB 279. We support initiatives that promote self-determination and self-sufficiency. This bill provides incentives for working persons with disabilities to retain assets and still remain eligible for Medicaid. The bill would change the statute to remove the current asset limits of \$10,000 for a single person and \$15,000 for a couple.

We have concerns about HB 5437. This bill would require the Department of Social Services study the cost-effectiveness and service delivery of nonemergency medical transportation services for medical assistance providers and issue a report no later than July 1, 2017. We are grateful to the committee for raising this bill which is a means of addressing the problems with non-emergency medical transportation services. A report was issued to DSS about problems with the current vendor. You will hear stories from many individuals who have experienced problems with Logisticare, such as showing up late or not at all, long waits on the call lines, and refusal to provide urgently needed (but not emergency) transportation for a medical appointment when the call requesting transportation was made fewer than 48 hours before the appointment. People who rely on NEMT to address chronic medical needs should not have to experience undue anxiety wondering whether their ride will get them to their appointment on time, and then back home – and they should not have to wait more than a year for DSS to do another study. We believe that the current contract should be revised to improve standards, require the vendor to report to DSS on compliance with those standards, and give DSS the ability to impose meaningful sanctions for noncompliance. You will hear from other advocates who have prepared a detailed analysis of the current contract and suggestions for improvement, along with alternative language for this bill. We urge this committee to adopt the alternative language.

We support HB 5439. Eleven of the 51 questions on the application for benefits from DSS are about assets. All of the answers to those questions must be verified by DSS before someone can receive benefits. Very few people are denied for being over the asset limits (less than one percent of total denials are for excess assets): \$1,600 for an individual and \$2,400 for a married couple for the state supplement program; \$3,000 for TFA; and \$250 for SAGA. In a year when the state is looking to save money and streamline processes, this bill makes sense: continuing to implement asset limits costs the State money and wastes time that DSS workers could be using to process applications, rather than verifying assets. States that have already eliminated asset limits are reporting that doing so had a minimal impact on the caseload and ultimately saved money.